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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the perception of "self" and "other" in the relationship between teacher and student as well as in all human relations. The dialogical philosophy of Martin Buber that defines an "I-Thou" relationship as one where the relationship exists in concert and not singly is described. The "I" is not independent, but rather interdependent with "thou." Within the context of the teacher-student dynamic, the role of the teacher can only equate with the "I"; however the student who assumes the role of "other" within this dynamic, may, in fact, become the "I" in subsequent personal relationships. In considering the method and content of education, Buber believes that rather than impressing a vast array of facts on the students' memories, teachers must educate them so that knowledge becomes an organic part of their existence. This position provides grounding for the infusion of multicultural concerns in education that foster an attitude of communion and human relatedness between the "self" and expanded "others." Educators need to be aware of the kinetic movement between the attitudes of "I-Thou" and "I-it." The "I-it" attitude is represented by the teacher who treats the student as an "it," a vessel, an object to be filled with information and not experienced. Often educators view multicultural education as separate and isolated projects. Infusion would require teachers to adopt a more holistic approach. Coming in line with a multicultural mindset challenges teachers to respond to curriculum and students with a natural behavior of respect and inclusion for ethnic information and diversity. (DK)

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"Human beings relate to each other not simply externally, like to billiard balls, but by the relations of the two worlds of experience that come into play when two people meet." (R. D. Laing, 1967)

The concept multicultural education which infuses a "self" perception in relation to an awareness of "others," must be ascribed to teacher by teacher, and experienced student by student in order to foster human relatedness in the classroom community. In embarking upon this discussion of multicultural education it is of value to consider the role of "self" and "others," inherently it is the "self" in meaningful dialogue with the "other" that both establishes the need for and promotes exploration of teaching toward cultural diversity. The level of open humaness called for to receive "others" as significant to each individual human life is represented in philosophical anthropology and dialogical philosophy as presented by Martin Buber (1965).

The core of Buber's dialogical philosophy is his "I-Thou" concept which evolved out of his proposition of unity.

> "The I-Thou relation is primal. ... the unmediated 'whole being' of a person is expressed... The young child offers perhaps the clearest illustration of this notion. In its prenatal stage, the child is naturally united with its mother in more ways than one. He comes into the world with an impulse for relation throughout the rest of its life." (Boni, 1982, p. 116)

Buber asserted that the most significant life achievement for any man "is the attainment of unity: unity within the single man, unity between man and man, unity among nations, unity between mankind and the inanimate world, and unity between the universe and God" (Weinstein, 1975, p. 19).

Buber claimed that the "I-Thou" relationship exists in concert and not singlely. The "I" is not independent, but rather interdependent with "Thou." This mutuality implies a compelling or cooperative attitude.

> "For Buber, existence is principally the enactment of communion. The self is transformed into an autonomous essence in the very process in which the relationship with the other person unfolds, when the self is confirmed by another person...without the Other, the I is impossible." (Cohen, 1983, p. 51)

Such dialogue according to Buber necessitates "seeing the other side" or "experiencing the other side."

> "Only through 'seeing the other' can the I-thou relationship become fully real, for only through it can one be sure that one is really helping the other person. ...Only if we see a man in his concrete otherness is there any possibility of our confirming him in his individuality as that which he must become. 'Seeing the other' is for this reason of central significance for ... teaching." (Friedman, 1976, pp. 204-205)

Buber's explorations of interpersonal relations, when examined in the context of education, present the teacher as the principle observer/evaluator in the learning situation. Within the context of the teacher-student dynamic, the role of the teacher can only equate with the "I," however the student who assumes the role of "other"

within this dynamic, may in fact, become the "I" in subsequent personal relations.

> "Through discovering the 'otherness' of the pupil the teacher discovers his own real limits, but also through this discovery he recognizes the forces of the world which the child needs to grow and he draws those forces into himself. Thus, through his concern with the child, the teacher educates himself." (Friedman, 1976, p. 177)

In this manner the teacher will derive meaning from within the realm of the "otherness," thus the teacher, as the teacher, becomes the teacher.

In considering the method and content of education,

> "Buber holds that rather than impressing a vast array of facts on the student's memory, we must educate him in such a way that his knowledge -that is the whole complex of his information- becomes an organic part of his existence." (Cohen, 1983, p. 48)

This position provides grounding for the infusion of multicultural concerns in education, which fosters an attitude of communion and human relatedness between the "self" and expanded "others." For unity or communion to be realized, the teacher and student must freely engage in dialogue, an "I-Thou" relationship. Educators need to be aware of the kinetic movement between the attitudes of "I-Thou" and "I-It." The "I-It" attitude is represented by the educator who treats the student as an "It," a vessel, an object to be filled with information and not experienced. "I-It" exists as monologue, a one-sided, uni-directional discourse in which the speaker, "I," may labor under the illusion of getting to the "other side," beyond one's

self.

Too often educators have viewed multicultural education as separate and isolated events, activities, or projects; exemplifying the "I-It" attitude. Infusion on the other hand would require that teachers adopt a more holistic approach to their discipline and students. Crucial to a successful infusion of cultural content would be the educator's felt responsibility for expanded investigation of appropriate literature, materials, and non-traditional community resources. By implanting these unifying experiences within the teacher's own philosophy of teaching, the result should be a heightened sensitivity to the standards comprising diverse cultural groups.

In acknowledging each culture as "a set of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, communicating, and acting," (Goodenough, 1970, p. 99), a teacher committed to multicultural education should strive to develop the competencies of children in American schools by introducing them to a range of diverse cultural groups, in order to facilitate successful interpersonal relationships, to develop a sense of self, and to foster the appreciation of success within a novel set of cultural standards. One methodology by which to create an environment for multicultural learning would be the use of infusion, which could serve as a catalyst to instill, imbue, and inspire connective human relatedness in the classroom.

> "In Buber's writings the self come-to-be in genuine relation, or else he orients himself through I-It relations until such time as he succeeds in entering into dialogue. The possibility is always there- man needs but to avail himself to it." (Boni, 1982, p. 172)

The goal of this philosophical method is to enable the teacher to address and incorporate the "I-Thou" attitude. Traditionally, attitudes, which Allport (1935, p. 798) defined as "...a ...state of readiness, organized through experience..." have been monitored by soliciting a judgment of positive or negative feelings toward some objective entity outside the "self." Identifying trends in individual attitudes is quite a phenomena when one considers the vast diversity among individuals' experiences with and responses to significant objects, persons, and situations. Becoming aware of the attitudes and manifested behaviors of others, in relation to one's own experience of the same reality, marks the revelation of an internal communication among human beings inherent from birth, linked to primary beliefs, and confirmed through a responsive "other." Such affiliated pluralistic Truths may be expressed in verbal and non-verbal practices (Schmeidler and Windlholz, 1971), and convey the attitudes of an "other," whose life from childhood might have been different from one's own. The acceptance level for novel impressions from a differing "other" correlate directly to the level of attainment and respect for "self" perceptions among concrete operational individuals (Doyle, Beaudet and Aboud, 1988).

Adapting a personal attitude of <u>infusion</u> for novel cultural information may require of some teachers a shift in stance concerning their approach to "educating" through master example. Coming in line with a "multicultural mind-set," challenges teachers to respond to curriculum as well as students with a natural behavior

of respect and inclusion for ethnic information and diversity. This infusion into all realms of the classroom learning experience may provide the catalyst for meaningful dialogue, leading to unfolded self-knowledge for both the teacher and the student. This evolution solicits the teacher act upon elemental values at the core of his or her proximal belief structure, and encourages the teacher to view the benefits of responsive pluralistic behaviors. "Only the teacher who believes what she [he] teaches can be readily effective in reducing prejudice among her [his] pupils. Children are influenced not so much by what is said, but by how it is said (Saenger, 1953, p. 194)."

> "The sphere of the interhuman, Buber explains, is the sphere of one person confronting his fellow, and I term the process by which the one who we confront is understood-dialogue. Buber is talking about authentic dialogue, whose interhuman significance is that men reveal themselves to one another as they are in essence. What is important here is not that one man reveals all of his thoughts to another, but that he allows the sharer of his self-revelation to participate in his personal being. (Cohen, 1983,p. 92)

Implementation of infusion throughout education that is truly multicultural demands a responsive and interactive structure, which values authentic dialogue within the interhuman sphere.

"All real living is meeting."
(Buber, 1923)

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